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ABSTRACT

One of the most vexing problems confronting today's prospective teachers is pupil management or discipline. There are many different opinions regarding what preservice teachers should reasonably be expected to know and minimum conditions they should establish for classroom management. However, two outcomes of teacher preparation appear essential. First, the teacher education curriculum should include the teaching of disciplining methods, with focus on keeping students on-task. Second, prospective teachers should be taught to help students learn a repertoire of positive problem solving strategies geared to the appropriate grade level. To be able to achieve these outcomes, prospective teachers must know how to reach three specific objectives: (1) foster student involvement; (2) focus student attention on learning; and (3) serve as positive role models. Although teachers should work toward dealing with behavioral problems to foster growth toward self-discipline, teachers must also realize that misbehavior is a part of classroom life. (CB)

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Classroom Management:
Perspectives for the Preservice Teacher

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Classroom Management:
Perspectives for the Preservice Teacher

One of the most vexing problems confronting today's prospective teachers is pupil management or discipline. The variety of student needs and the diversity of parental and teacher opinions make effective discipline difficult. What should preservice teachers reasonably be expected to know? What minimum conditions should they be able to establish relative to classroom management? Two outcomes of teacher preparation experiences appear essential.

First, disciplining methods taught as part of the teacher preparation curriculum should focus on keeping students on-task. Prospective teachers should know how to avoid causing or becoming a distraction during class activities. Some teachers regularly interrupt learning and make endless announcements or they rely heavily on public reprimands: "John, what are you doing?" or "Sue, how many times have I told you to keep your hands to yourself!" Others are able to guide learning quietly and to discipline students unobtrusively.

Second, prospective teachers should help students learn a repertoire of positive problem solving strategies, and those strategies need to be appropriate to the grade level of a child. Typically, students acquire conflict resolution skills through

observation. They see their parents and teachers cope with problems and express emotions. They watch and learn. They learn to turn the other cheek or to fight, to respect the rights of peers or to assume that the needs of others are unimportant.

Reaching these two goals requires that prospective teachers know how to reach three specific objectives: (a) foster student involvement, (b) focus student attention on learning, and (c) serve as positive role models.

Involvement: Prospective teachers must know how to provide adequate opportunities for broad-based student involvement in class activities. To some degree everyone wants to feel needed and noticed. Many of the disruptive behaviors that students exhibit are simple pleas for attention and recognition. The misbehaviors are nonverbal expressions demanding that the teacher "look at me."

For children to obey rules and to engage in learning, they must experience involvement and sense that they are an important part of the school and classroom culture. Hence, prospective teachers must learn to use a variety of means to create "belongingness." They might learn how to use techniques that foster equitable student participation. Some practicing teachers, for example, never allow students to raise their hands during recitations. They carry a stack of cards when they conduct discussions, with each card containing a different student's name. They shuffle the cards and call on students based on luck-of-the-draw.

Preservice teachers need to observe teachers using such methods and to reflect on (and discuss) the consequences of the techniques.

Other teachers continually change their instructional "action" zone by moving around the room and equitably interacting with students. During recitations and independent seatwork they focus attention on all students, not a select few. They talk freely with the students, answering questions and offering additional assistance. As a result, both high and low ability students are systematically included in classroom activities and experiences. Prospective teachers must know the different ways of changing the action zone (e.g., moving around the classroom, rearranging the desks) and must be able to describe the effects of such changes on student participation. (Additional methods of involving student isolates and non-volunteers are described by Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Kravas, Kauchak, Pendergrass, and Keough, 1985.)

Students who are excluded, who view the school as "theirs," have fewer qualms about treating peers and teachers with disrespect. Students, on the other hand, who perceive themselves as part of the classroom system are less likely to "strike out." Being involved in and belonging to the school culture engenders more acceptable student behavior because students have an investment. They see the school as "ours."

Some schools encourage student responsiblity through

collective decision-making. Teachers and students participate in formulating school and classroom rules that are reasonable, enforceable, and understandable. Everyone is involved: students, because they must obey procedures; teachers, because they will enforce them.

Preservice teachers should know how to create reasonable, enforceable, and understandable rules. This knowledge may be derived through activities during methods courses in which students develop and defend a set of rules and then watch practicing teachers enforce similar rules. Prospective teachers also must be able to articulate how (and whether) students participate in the rule-making process. What are the benefits of such participation? How can students become involved without causing the teacher to relinguish power?

The level of decision-making involvement that prospective teachers use will vary, of course, according to the school and grade level, but the premise is the same regardless of the context: If students are going to be held accountable for their actions, they must be given opportunities to make decisions about their environment. Self-discipline cannot be learned unless children are given opportunities to assume responsibility. Prospective teachers must learn how and why to foster self-discipline in the students they teach.

<u>Attention: Prospective teachers should deal with mild disruptions by refocusing student attention on learning tasks</u>.

Imagine two teachers confronting the same problem: Students are talking in the back of the room. The first teacher uses a conventional (public) approach to elicit a student response. Snapping his fingers, the teacher says, "John, Sam, stop talking back there. I have just about had it with you two." Of course, when John and Sam are reprimanded all other students in the class turn to see what is going on - the ripple effect. Now everyone is off-task. This teacher uses what Rinne (1984) and others (see, for example, ASCD, 1984) call a "high profile" disciplining technique: a method that distracts student attention from academic tasks by focusing on misbehavior rather than on learning.

The second teacher, on the other hand, uses a low profile approach. While teaching map skills, Ms. Wilson observes John and Sam talking. She continues the lesson but walks toward the boys and stands near them. By moving closer, Ms. Wilson increases the likelihood that John and Sam will stop talking. Potentially, proximity to authority creates greater obedience, but it does not ensure it. The students (in this case) continue to talk. Next, Ms. Wilson uses a name-dropping technique. "Let us suppose," says Ms. Wilson, "that the French had developed a relatively precise timepiece. A watch similar to John's or a clock like one you have at home, Sam."

Ms. Wilson uses both boy's names (name-dropping) as part of the lesson. She does not stop instruction to reprimand them.

Rather, she keeps teaching and attempts to redirect the boys' attention by relying upon the power associated with using the students' names.

Ms. Wilson's approach does not unnecessarily intrude on the learning process. The attention of the students is not directed toward Sam or John but toward the lesson concepts. Low level approaches similar to Ms. Wilson's are not always possible. At times teachers must be more directive and must use more force. The secret is: keeping interactions from evolving into win-lose confrontations where either a teacher or student must back down or risk losing face.

Preventing the escalation of minor misbehaviors to serious ones is particularly important given Kounin's (1970) findings regarding group management. Kounin found that the vast majority of student misbehaviors were relatively low level and innocuous, such as talking to a neighbor or talking out of turn. Yet, though student misbehaviors were generally classified as low level, teacher responses were most frequently high level and public (e.g., use of threat or punishment that is seen by the entire class). As Orlich et al. (1985) describe, "when teachers were given the options of punishing, providing a suitable desist, or prescribing another form of productive activity in reaction to these [low level] misbehaviors, over half of the teachers' reactions were classified as high-level, public-dimension desists" (p. 345).

Preservice teachers must learn (be trained) to respond to minor misbehaviors in a low-profiling manner. Such behavior is not a part of most preservice teachers' natural behavioral patterns, particularly given that most teachers unconsciously copy the desist techniques they experienced themselves as students during elementary and secondary experiences (see, for example, Clark, in press).

Preservice teachers need to learn how to use low-level desists and when to be private in responding to nontask misbehavior. (See Orlich et al., 1985 for an extended discussion of the low level of force dimension and public-private dimension concepts.) They need to understand the nuances and power of various response strategies and particularly the effects of various techniques on student misbehavior. For example, studies by Madsen, Becker, Thomas, Koser and Plager (1968) and O'Leary, Kaufman, Kass and Drabman (1970) suggest that loud (public teacher) reprimands for children's out-of-seat behavior actually increases the incidence of the behavior. The amount of misbehavior increases because of the manner in which the teacher disciplines.

Rinne (1985) decribes methods for including low-profile training procedures in the preservice curriculum. In Rinne's study, preservice teachers practiced non-distractive (low-profile) techniques in dealing with problems such as chronic talking and comic book reading. The trained teachers, as might be expected, did become better at not distracting student learn-

ing. But there was a more interesting finding. Rinne concluded "that if a teacher education program does not specifically train teachers to use non-distractive classroom control techniques, the teachers will be as distractive after [professional] training as they were before" (p.1). They will, in essence, tend to discipline just as they were disciplined. To use skills effectively, preservice teachers must understand the conceptual importance of a skill and have experience in using the skill in simulation and classroom settings.

Role-modeling: Prospective teachers should role-model problem solving behaviors when dealing with serious misbehaviors. Effective classroom managers use punishment and highly public desists as a last resort. They understand the power of their behavior and the effect their actions have on children. They discipline their emotions and have controlled responses to student misbehavior. Indeed, adults teach by what they do more than by what they say. Draper (1978) noted this phenomenon among the African !Kung - a nonviolent, nonaggressive, hunting-gathering tribe.

> I was often surprised at the ability of adults to monitor the emotional states of children even when the children were far enough away that the conversations could not be heard. When play gets too tough or arguments too intense, an adult will call one of the ringleaders away . . . . This way of disciplining children has important consequences for aggressiveness in childhood and later in adulthood. Since parents do not use physical punishment, and since aggressive postures are avoided by adults and devalued by society at large, children have relatively little opportunity

to observe or imitate overtly aggressive behavior. (pp. 36-37)

A teacher who is physically or verbally aggressive engenders similar behavior in students. Aggression begets aggression. The teacher who relies on punishment creates hostility rather than trust and engenders feelings of inferiority rather than self-confidence. Punishment strategies prevent, in essence, the psychological and emotional growth of a child.

One large midwestern city school staff paddled over 10,000 children in 1983. What did those children learn? Did they learn how to control their own behavior? Are they more self-disciplined now than before the paddlings? Even assuming the paddlings were for serious offenses, did the teachers have options? Would other approaches have been more effective?

Prospective teachers should become aware of when to punish, what punishment does to students (affectively), and how to effectively use punishment -- for example, punishments should always be related to the misbehavior and students should be given at least one warning before a punishment is delivered (Good and Brophy, 1984).

Prospective teachers should be knowledgeable of the research on punishment and be able to describe in detail two punishments that they would use for the age-level students they plan to teach. Preservice teachers, for instance, who plan to work with elementary students might learn how and when to use exclusion procedures. Carducci (1984) suggests that teachers identify

quiet places in the school (or classroom, if possible) where highly disruptive students can regain their composure. Subsequently, a student and an adult can begin to work together to determine how to prevent a problem's reoccurence. The difficulty with this approach is that it is complex and time-consuming, which may explain Brophy and Rohrkemper's (1980) observation that though student involvement in correcting disruptive behavior is desirable, it seldom occurs. Good and Brophy (1984) argue that:

> [T]he place designated for excluded students should be located so that students sent there will be excluded psychologically as well as physically. They should be placed behind the other students, where they cannot easily attract their attention . . . In combination with the techniques for explaining the punishment . . . This will help insure that the exclusion is experienced as punishment and has the desired effects on behavior. (p. 217)

Teachers who plan to work with young children, should be cognizant of selected punishment techniques for use with severe behavioral problems. Elementary teachers should know how and why to avoid personal attacks (sarcasm), physical punishment, and meaningless extra work. Further, they should know how and when to withdraw privileges, to exclude students, and to relate punishments to specific offenses.

Teachers working with older students (see George, 1980; Duke and Meckel, 1984) should be able to describe and use different conflict resolution strategies, such as those described by Levin, Nolan and Hoffman (1985). Levin and his colleagues created,

and empirically tested, a conflict resolution technique for use with chronic, severe discipline problems. They engage students in behavioral self-analysis. The technique, in abbreviated form, entails the following steps:

1) The student and teacher identify the behaviors that are disrupting the class or interrupting student learning. They also discuss the impact of a behavior on the rest of the class.
2) Once the behavior is identified, the teacher explains why it is unacceptable.
3) The teacher keeps an anecdotal record on student behavior and explains that the student will be required to read and sign the record daily.
4) The teacher seeks a verbal commitment from the student for improved behavior.

This anecdotal strategy sensitizes students to the behavior the teacher is seeking to eliminate and encourages student self-discipline rather than teacher control. Levin, Nolan, Hoffman and Jones (1984) note:

> After the initial conference the anecdotal record is kept daily, documenting both positive and negative behaviors and the teacher's corrective measures. The teacher should attempt to reinforce the student for improved behaviors and, if possible, clarify the connection between better grades and improved behavior. It is very important that the teacher be consistent in both the daily recording of student and teacher behaviors and obtaining the student's signature. Teachers often anticipate that such a technique will consume much instructional time; however, this is not

> the case. If the documentation occurs in the last few minutes of class, the two or three minutes required compare favorably to the enormous amount of time that can be wasted by unresolved chronic discipline problems. (p. 5)

There are other conflict resolution strategies, such as Gordon's (1974) "no lose" methods for resolving conflicts and Glasser's (1977) ten steps for dealing with serious problems. Regrettably, few teachers have been systematically observed using the Gordon and Glasser methods to determine the efficacy of the techniques in resolving problems (see Good and Brophy, 1984 for additional discussion of this idea). And though Levin et al. (1985) have completed some empirical testing, much more work is needed to determine limitations to their approach. For example, Nolan (1985) indicated that though Levin and colleagues' (1985) conflict management strategy worked effectively with older students, it failed to foster behavior change in second graders. This reinforces George's (1980) assertion that disciplining techniques must be geared to contextual factors and to the stage of moral development of students.

Involvement, attention to task, and role-modeling. The concepts are important prescriptions for prospective teachers. They will not eliminate misbehavior, but they should mitigate student disruptiveness and create a more positive framework for student learning. Perhaps the most important concept that can be shared with prospective teachers is that misbehavior is a part of classroom life. As long as schools and children exist, misbehavior will be evidenced. Indeed, children learn and

develop as a result of misbehaving. It is one way of exploring their potential and of understanding their limitations. What teachers should do (and prospective teachers must learn to do) is deal with behavioral problems to foster growth toward self-discipline.

Reference Note

1.) Clark argues that many, if not most, of the behaviors prospective teachers exhibit during student teaching are ones they bring with them to the student teaching experience. Current methods of professional preparation, he argues, fail to supersede the natural behavioral dispositions of the preservice teacher.

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